2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

18 *adolescence, courtship, and marriage:*

882 192 [881] [589] THE PERIOD between childhood and adulthood is relatively ill-defined in Tepoztlán and unmarked by special occasion or ceremony. In the recent past, this interim was brief or non-existent for girls. Until about age twelve, girls were called *niña* or *sisigwa*, and from twelve to fourteen they were *señorita* or *ichpokame*. But because of early marriage most girls passed directly from *niña* to *señora*. *Señoritas* who did not marry soon were *solteras* or *ichpokath*. At the present time in Tepoztlán, girls are *niñas* until about age fifteen and are *señoritas* between about fifteen and twenty. Though girls over twenty are still *señoritas* they are viewed as *solteras*. Both the period of childhood and marriageability have been lengthened by several years. A majority of the parents withdraw their daughters from school at about twelve, the age at which girls were married a generation ago. This practice extends the interim period rather than childhood, because girls of twelve and over conduct themselves more like *señoritas* than like *niñas*.

882 [582]

The situation was and is quite different for boys, who, unlike girls, were not hurried into adulthood by early marriage. In the past, as well as now, boys are called *muchachos* or *piltontle* from about age seven to seventeen or eighteen. There is no native term to differentiate any periods within this wide age range. After seventeen or eighteen, boys are called *jóvenes*, *muchachos*, or *telpokath*. This period varies considerably in length, since there is no set or recommended age for marriage for boys. Compared with girls, the change in age status of boys occurs later, more gradually, and with less strain. Today the development of boys is even slower because the assumption of full-time adult work, which for many in the past took place at about ten years of age, now generally occurs at fifteen. Childhood, or the period of play and education, has thus been lengthened, and boys may go to school as late as fourteen years of age without incurring criticism.

[192] [582] [872]

ADOLESCENCE

883 The intermediate period between childhood and adulthood begins to have the characteristics of adolescence, as we know it, and some of the better educated people in Tepoztlán now use this term. There are, however, several fundamental differ-

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

be cause for a sharp scolding or slap. Ideally, the girl is not supposed to leave the house unaccompanied, though expediency frequently demands that she does.

The responsibility of guarding the chastity and reputation of one or more daughters of marriageable age is often felt to be a burden by the mother. One mother said that she wished her fifteen-year-old daughter would marry soon because it was inconvenient to "spy" on her all the time.

For most girls, the appearance of the first menses is a traumatic experience. Many fear it signifies that they are no longer virgins, others that they have an internal lesion and will bleed to death. Most girls associate it with something shameful, dirty, and even punishable, and keep it secret from parents and sisters. A very much frightened girl sometimes seeks reassurance by confiding in her grandmother or in a friend. Girls who are still in school at an age when there is interest in such matters generally learn some of the facts of menstruation from other girls. There is a tendency for more educated girls to feel less guilt and be less secretive about menstruation both in school and at home, but almost all girls express shame and disgust in connection with it.

When girls married before puberty, it was widely believed that menstruation was caused by sexual intercourse. When marriages began to take place after puberty, this belief broke down and is no longer held by most people, but it still persists among some. For example, an uncle, who accidentally became aware that his fifteen-year-old niece was menstruating, denounced the girl as not being a virgin and scolded her mother for not guarding her.

The grandmother, or the mother when she learns of it, gives the girl advice on proper care during menstruation. Most warn against bathing or washing the feet or eating "cold" foods, such as pork, avocado, beans, and lemon, since these are believed to stop the flow. Menstruation is expected to last three days, and the flow is generally sparse, requiring only the wearing of an extra pair of underdrawers. If the flow is longer than three or four days, there is some concern over it, and herb medicines are usually taken.

The adjustment of the adolescent girl to her situation at home varies considerably. In large part it depends upon the girl's relations with the mother, since it is with her that there is most contact. The close relationship of the adolescent girl with her mother is recent in Tepoztlán, for child marriage and patrilocal residence in past years effectively severed the mother-daughter tie. The young daughter in law was looked upon as the main source of assistance for the mother. Now it is the grown daughter who partially fills this role. Her work is obligatory, "Why then do we rear children except to help us?" The mother of a grown girl is considered fortunate because "now she has someone to work for her."

Many of the attitudes of the mother-in-law toward the daughter-in-law have been carried over to the daughter. There is a tendency for mothers to "retire" from most of the heavy household duties and to shift the major burden of the household upon the daughters, assuming the role of director rather than partner. Many mothers are critical, demanding, and querulous with their daughters and scold